2:Oberg E-5 (1946-1947)1949 SK7 Guana SK7
Terena

[Chaco Period]

THE TERENA

(Pls. 1–11)

TERENA ECONOMY IN THE CHACO

HABITAT

Although it is no longer possible to determine by direct investigation the exact nature of the economy of the Terena upon their entry into the Chaco, indirect evidence points to agriculture as being the basis of subsistence. The Terena are an Arawak-speaking people and the Arawak-speaking tribes in the Amazon Basin are predominantly agriculturists. Terena myths tell of how *Yúrikoyuvakái* taught the people to practice agriculture:

> The Indians were hungry but they had no tools and did not know how to obtain food. The twins then gave the Indians all their tools. To the men, *Yúrikoyuvakái* gave the ax, *povóoti;* the digging stick, *ilomo'i;* the knife, *piritau;* the sickle, *yopílocóti;* the war club, *puló'oi;* the bow, *shokió;* arrows, *shumó;* and the spear, *suiká.* To the women, the twins gave the spindle, *hopóe. Yúrikoyuvakái* then taught the Indians how to hunt, fish, and grow crops.

We know, too, from old records, that the Arawak-speaking neighbors of the Terena were agriculturists. Thus, although no direct written or verbal evidence exists concerning the original nature of Terena economy it appears reasonably safe to assume that they were agriculturists in pre-Columbian days.

The Terena now describe their economic life in the Chaco as having been based on agriculture, hunting, fishing, collecting, and raiding. This shift away from an emphasis on agriculture is understandable. The Chaco with comparatively greater sources of wild food plants, fish, and game than existed in the tropical forest, offered not only the resources but a stimulus for their use. In addition, the practice of agriculture in the Chaco was not the same as in the rain forest. The long drought period in the Chaco demanded a storable surplus not necessary in a region where annual rainfall is more evenly distributed. Above all, the Terena came into contact with Chaco tribes that depended principally upon hunting, fishing, and collecting, and a mutual exchange of economic customs seems to have taken place. When the Terena took over the horse and the practice of hunting and raiding their neighbors on horseback, dependence

[P. 6-A]

to return to the village or otherwise get into contact with the living. 775

Beyond serving as a means for accounting for the existence of the world, the "High God," *Itukoviche*, was not significant. It may even turn out that the belief in a "High God" is due to Christian influence. There appear to be no myths or rituals connected with *Itukoviche*. The really important supernatural beings were the twin culture heroes, *Yúrikoyuvakái*. By reference to these twins the Terena explain their origin and the origin of agriculture, fire, and other elements of their culture. The Terena have a number of myths about the origin and exploits of the twin culture heroes. One version expresses the origin of *Yúrikoyuvakái* as follows: 776 773 776 773 539

In the beginning *Yúrikoyuvakái* was just one being. He lived with his sister *Livéchechevéna*. When his sister planted a garden, *Yúrikoyuvakái* stole the fruits. *Livéchechevéna* then became very angry and cut *Yúrikoyuvakái* in two, both halves later growing into the twins.

Another version states that the twins originated from a centipede:

Yúrikoyuvakái was a centipede who lived with his mother. He made his mother very angry because he wanted to follow her into the fields every day. One day she became so angry that she cut him in two. The two halves grew up into twins.

The Terena claim that everything they possessed in the past was received from the twin culture heroes. One myth expresses the origin of the Terena as follows:

In the beginning there were the twins *Yúrikoyuvakái*. They both had the same name. They used to walk around the world setting traps to catch birds. One morning they did not find a bird in the trap but only the remains of a bird. As some one was stealing their birds the twins decided to set a watch over the trap. They ordered the lizard to watch the trap. But the lizard was lazy and careless and did not see who was stealing the birds. When the twins saw that the trap was empty, they questioned the lizard who could not answer. The twins then became very angry and threw the lizard against a tree, and that is why lizards live in trees even today. The twins then ordered a little bird, "bemtevi," to watch the trap. Next morning the twins found the trap empty and when they questioned "bemtevi" about who had stolen the bird, he flew up and down over a bunch of grass and chirped, "This is the door to the place from where the people came who robbed your trap." Then the twins pulled out the bunch of grass and found a door, and when they opened the door, they found a hole in the ground full of Indians.

The twins ordered the Indians to come out. They all came out, not one remaining in the hole. The Indians

had their mouths open, but they could not speak, so the twins gave them a language and put them into a place where they could live. But the Indians had no fire and shivered with cold. The twins then ordered the hare to go and fetch fire which at this time was kept by *Takeoré*. *Takeoré* refused to give it to the hare and stood over the fire with open legs. The hare took a bean, *hicoé*, and threw it into the fire and when the bean burst *Takeoré* was frightened so badly that the hare was able to steal a live coal and run away. But *Takeoré* pursued the hare and when he almost caught him, the hare hid in a hollow tree. *Takeoré* thrust a stick into the hole to kill the hare. The hare cut his foot and let the blood run over the stick. When *Takeoré* saw the blood he believed that the hare was dead and went away. The hare then picked up the live coal, ran to the Indians and threw the coal into a field which caught on fire. The Indians now had fire and were warm.

The Indians were hungry but they had no tools and did not know how to obtain food. The twins then gave the Indians all their tools. To the men *Yúrikoyuvakái* gave the ax, *povóoti;* the digging stick, *ilomé'i;* the knife, *piritau;* the sickle, *yopilokóti;* the war club, *puló'oi;* and the bow, *shekié;* arrows, *shumé;* and the spear, *suiké*. To the women the twins gave the spindle, *hopée*. *Yúrikoyuvakái* then taught the Indians how to hunt, fish, and grow crops.

The culture hero legends provide a mythical charter for the Terena way of life. The importance of the earth is stressed. The Indians came out of the earth. Agriculture was a male occupation while women spun cotton. The culture hero gave them language, fire, and economic techniques. The cunning necessary to survive in the struggle of life is stressed in the story of the hare stealing fire. The twins, *Yúrikoyuvakái*, were not the creators of the world of animals and men. They were benevolent beings who freed the Indians and taught them the arts of social life.

On the other hand, the Terena have evil spirits in their pantheon of supernatural beings, such as *Vanónu*, *Voropí*, and *Hihiaiuné*. It is curious to note that these mythical monsters are the causes of heavy rains and floods, physical phenomena which occur in the Chaco and which were a real danger to the Terena. Referring to a flood, *ivoyóneti*, we have the following story:

It rained without stopping. It was *Vanónu* speaking from the sky, it was *Vanónu* coming down. The rain covered the field, water was overflowing everywhere. Then there was a shaman who began to sing and shake his gourd rattle, *ititaka*. If *Vanónu* came to the ground everything would be covered with water. The shaman sang telling *Vanónu* to go back into the sky. Then *Vanónu* spoke like thunder, the Indians heard *Vanónu's* voice, but they could not understand him. *Vanónu* was evil and was

bringing harm to the Indians. The shaman kept on singing. He kept on singing for a long time until *Vanónu's* voice became weaker and weaker and he stopped speaking altogether. When the rain ceased the shaman stopped singing.

Another evil spirit who lives near water and brings storms is *Voropí:*

Voropí is a water spirit. He lives in a tree near the bank of a stream. He is a great serpent with a human face. He does not like human smell and if some person comes near his home he becomes very angry and sends heavy rain, and lightning flashes from his sides. When he is very angry he sends so much rain that people drown. *Voropí* does not like human hair and that is why the Indians in the Chaco pull out their eyebrows, their pubic hair, and why men pull out the hairs on their chins. Bathing in lakes and rivers makes *Voropí* angry.

Hihíaiuné is a female water spirit who lives in the rivers of the Chaco:

Hihíaiuné is a large serpent. She hates menstruating women and people who are mourning for the dead. A menstruating woman must remain indoors and on no account go to a lake or river to wash, for this would anger *Hihíaiuné* who would send the winds *saipoti* and *saiponé* which in turn would bring heavy rains and floods. If a man should have contact with a menstruating woman, he too must avoid water for fear that a flood would destroy his house. To avoid sexual contact menstruating women paint themselves black.

The Terena believed, and still believe, that the affairs of men are directly influenced by spirits, not only by such as *Voropí*, *Vanónu, and Hihíaiuné* and the ghosts of the dead, but by the souls of living men, animals, plants, and inanimate objects. Sickness, misfortune, and death are caused by spirits and souls of the dead. On the other hand, success in war, hunting, fishing, farming, and love-making can be achieved through the assistance of these spiritual entities. People fear the ghosts of the dead, for they sometimes come back to take a relative or friend to the land of the dead. The ghosts of dead shamans are even more powerful in their influence over human life. The anger of *Voropí*, *Vanónu*, and *Hihíaiuné* are a threat to life and property. But in addition to these dangers, the souls of people may leave their living bodies or the souls of objects and animals may cause these objects or animals to enter the body, thus bringing about illness or death.

SHAMANISM

Terena shamanism rests on the belief that the world of spirits, ghosts, and souls is open to human